Marriage *an honourable eſtate.*

A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

Driffield in *Glouceſterſhire*,

On Occaſion of the

HAPPY MARRIAGE

OF

Gabriel Hanger, Eſq;

AND

Mrs. *Elizabeth Bond.*

By *THOMAS HUMPHREYS*, M. A.
Late Vicar of *Dreffield.*

LONDON,

Printed for JAMES CROKATT; at the *Black-horſe* near *Fleet-bridge*, in *Fleet-ſtreet*. 1742.

[Price Six-Pence.]

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WITH

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Marriage is honourable——

THOUGH the dignity of the married ſtate, hath, in this laſt century, more than in any precedent age, been depretiated and vilify'd by the ſcurrilous invectives of ludicrous and pretending wits, and been made the common ſubject of railery and ridicule; yet, when we conſider from what quarter theſe rude blaſts of defamation and ſcandal are blown; if we obſerve from what party and ſet of men this ill-manner'd treatment has proceeded, we ſhall forbear to wonder in the leaſt at the ſcoffs and flouts that are thrown upon this ſo noble and ſacred a rite, ſince we ſhall find it to undergo but the ſame common fate with moſt excellent and worthy things, to be burleſqu'd and droll'd upon by a ſet of empty fops and profane debauchees.

It being generally found, that, with this ſort of perſons, every thing that is ſacred, is equally an object of deriſion as well as matrimony; and as they raiſe their batteries againſt this, they uſually carry their attacks againſt religion too, both alike, giving check to thoſe ſhameful impurities which they would fain indulge and wallow in without controul. Hence they repreſent both in the ſame odious colours, as uneaſy yoaks, and tugging at the oar, as ſhackles and reſtraints clapt upon the liberty of human nature.

So that were I to entertain an aſſembly of libertines upon the ſubject of marriage, in a ſolemn and ſerious way, I ſhould expect no other than a hiſs of diſapprobation, or at leaſt, a ſcornful ſneer at the unfaſhionable gravity of my theme.

But I am under no apprehenſions of giving a diſreliſh to men of morals and ſober conduct, (ſuch as I have now the pleaſure to ſpeak before) if I take upon me to become an advocate in the cauſe of marriage; eſpecially as I am ſupported by the venerable authority of the apoſtle, to maintain that *it is honourable.*

In order to do this, it will not be expected of me, and I do not think my argument engages me to ſay any thing diſparaging or undervaluing a ſingle life to enhance the credit of the married ſtate; it will not lie upon me to pronounce which is preferable, or even to make any

any compariſon between them. They have each their peculiar advantages and diſadvantages; and ſhould a man ſingle out and give a detail of the ſeveral conveniencies which one ſtate may be attended with, and enumerate the inconveniencies only to which the other is liable, it were not difficult to make either of them appear happy or miſerable, according to one's fancy or partiality. Either ſtate of life hath its proper reſpective comforts and uneaſineſſes; ſo that the circumſtances of particular men differing from one another, there can be no certain ſtandard fixed to decide by; but every man ought to be accounted wiſe or prudent, who chuſes that which is ſuitable to his genius, and moſt conducing to his own true content and happineſs. I ſay, I have nothing to do to make myſelf a judge; my buſineſs is only to uphold the reputation of the conjugal ſtate, to vindicate it from thoſe degrading imputations which its contemners would faſten upon it, and place it upon its rightful and genuine baſis of honour. To which title it can bring as juſtifiable pretenſions, and produce as good a patent for, as any one inſtitution, cuſtom, or uſage, that ever obtain'd in the univerſe.

I preſume I may, with the allowance of heraldry, venture to affirm that to be honourable, which derives from the higheſt fountain of authority, and can boaſt of the greateſt antiquity; which is held in the beſt eſteem and veneration by all people, nations, and languages, and which anſwers and promotes the grandeſt

intereſt and purpoſes of human life. Theſe few reaſons will all hold good in behalf of marriage, and will, inſtead of a great many more which might be produced, be ſufficient to illuſtrate this matter, and give in a full evidence to its honour.

Firſt, marriage is derived from higheſt authority, and can, with juſtice, boaſt of the greateſt antiquity. The author and founder of it was the *ancient of days*, God himſelf, the original and fountain of all true honour. It is a primitive inſtitution, not the device of prieſt-craft, or the invention of art or of ſtate to ſubjugate mankind to political thraldom; it has its riſe from the ſource of all perfection, before prieſts or politicians had their being; it was coæval with the world, its *Æra* bears the ſame date with the creation; it is an ordinance that did not come in with the conqueror, its traces may be run back, followed higher than *Cæſar* or *Alexander*, or any of the four monarchies, even to the firſt accounts of time, even to the firſt couple that had exiſtence in the univerſe. God himſelf joined together the firſt man and the firſt woman in wedlock, he was father and prieſt to both, he ſolemnized the marriage, and conſecrated the eſtate. As ſoon as he had given being to the firſt repreſentatives of mankind, the firſt ſpecimen he gave of his benevolence to them, and his inclination to communicate to them as great a degree of ſublunary happineſs as might be conſiſtent with and proper to that rank of beings wherein they were placed; he

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put them in poſſeſſion of each other, and made their union inviolable. The firſt gift he gave man was a wife; for, if we will take the opinion of ſome, *Adam* was made a huſband on the very day in which he was created, even when he was but a few hours old, and commenced man of full ſtature and perfection, as ſoon as God breathed into him the breath of life. But though *Adam* was ſeated in *Paradiſe* with the full furniture and choiceſt privileges of life, where there was nothing but plenty and pleaſure, innocence and ſecurity; in a ſituation under ſuch advantagious circumſtances, to give him every enjoyment both of body and mind, one would think nothing could have been wanting to compleat his earthly felicity; yet, notwithſtanding all this, God ſaw his being imperfect, and that it was not good for him to be alone; *i. e.* he was not ſo happy by himſelf as if he had a partner of the ſame ſpecies, but of a diſtinct ſex contrived for him, and therefore he formed woman as an help-meet for him. God, who made man, and knew beſt what was proper for him, pitched upon this method as moſt expedient to convey down the race of mankind, and maintain its ſucceſſion, till that period of time ſhall approach, when all things muſt ſubmit to a final diſſolution.

Thus, as marriage pleads a preſcription to the higheſt antiquity, ſo it may be farther obſerved, that it was inſtituted in the time of man's innocency, when he ſtood in high favour with God; before ſin had made a breach

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upon him to obſcure his intellectuals, or diſorder his morals. In this ſtate of purity, when his ſoul had contracted no blemiſh from evil, but was quite freſh and untainted, was he joined unto his wife, and, unconſcious of ſhame, becauſe unconſcious of guilt, they two became one fleſh.

How injuriouſly then do the *Roman* clergy treat marriage, when, in ſupport of celebracy, which all orders of them make profeſſion of, they alledge that it is an impediment to devotion, a cramp upon the ſpiritual ſerving of God, and decry it as an inſtrument of pollution and defilement, though they at the ſame time give it ſo much honour as to allow it a place among their ſacraments. Undoubtedly, God would never have ordained or introduced any act or thing that had a natural tendency to mangle the innocency of our firſt parents, or diſrobe them of their virtue; it would be blaſphemy to aſſert it. If you urge this, and tell them that God thought marriage was ſuitable to a paradiſiacal ſtate, and that the ſcripture does, in expreſs terms, declare it to be honourable *in all.* They have another ſhift in reſerve, they plead the intervention of a vow upon their entring into the prieſthood to continue ſingle. But I think a man ought to be well aſſured that he can be continent, before he entangles his ſoul with ſuch a vow, which few, very few, can be; and it is abſurd to ſay that he will pray to God to take from him all deſire of commerce with the female, and to keep him unpolluted: it is madneſs

neſs to vow that one will not eat, and then to pray that he may not be hungry. In ſhort, it is policy, and not piety, that is at the bottom of this celebacy. All I ſhall ſay to theſe revilers of matrimony, is to remind them what the *French* Proverb ſays of them; "That they have a law not to marry, and a "cuſtom not to live chaſte; and therefore "tell them, that it is better to be an honeſt "huſband than an incontinent prieſt." But, to return from this digreſſion, if one may call it ſo, we ſee that marriage has a juſt claim to the earlieſt antiquity, and that it was not deemed inconſiſtent with a ſtate of the greateſt perfection. I now go on,

Secondly, To another demonſtration of the dignity of the marriage ſtate, which may eaſily be raiſed from hence; that all nations, all ſorts of people, howſoever diſtinguiſhed from each other as to their various religions, government, and intereſts, concur in a joint eſteem of it by a conformity to its rites, and agree in one common ſentiment of beſtowing the greateſt marks of honour upon it.

Climates ſometimes change mens complexions, and have a great influence in altering their conſtitutions; they often vary in their practices and cuſtoms, according to the latitude they live in. But, whatever migrations men have made, to what country ſoever they have been tranſplantd, or what-

ever colonies they have ſettled, ſtill marriage has been retained; wedlock is practiſed all over the habitable world; go to the *Eaſt-Indies*, you will find it was immemorially uſed among the inhabitants there: when the *Weſt-Indies*, the new world, as it is called, was found out, the natives were as exact and peculiar in their ſeveral tribes and families thus propagated by marriage, almoſt as the *Jews*. However divided in other reſpects, this obtain'd amongſt them as an univerſal cuſtom; and there is ſcarce any race of men, who live in a total neglect and diſuſe of its rites, which hiſtorians or travellers inform us of, unleſs you reckon the *Hottentots*, which yet appear of late to have been miſrepreſented with reſpect to the point in hand, and to have ſomething like marriage in common with all nations.

But in all civilized nations, marriage was always held in the higheſt reputation, it had ſeveral previleges annexed to it, and in ſome countries penalties were inflicted for the omiſſion of it. Among the *Romans*, by the *Papian* law, whoever did not enter into marriage by the time he was five and twenty years of age, was made incapable of giving or receiving legacies, and was debarred of ſeveral other civil advantages.

It cannot then, with any ſhadow of reaſon, be denied or diſputed, but that a moſt ſignal ſtamp and character of honour is fixed upon marriage, as it appears to be found-

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ed upon the univerſal conſent, and confirmed by the ſuffrages of all mankind; their appearing ſo unanimous, amounts to no leſs than if its dignity were proclaimed by the voice of nature.

This is farther fortified by the ignominious and reproachful brand, that moſt nations, that have been any while under the culture and diſcipline of education, and rational improvements, have agreed to ſtigmatiſe the ſpurious off-ſpring of unlicenſed love; licentiouſneſs carrying a ſort of natural turpitude with it among all ſuch people, in that it has been more or leſs reſtrained by penal laws, having been treated as a very great enormity in the man and woman principally concerned, but extended even to the illegitimate, though innocent iſſue, of impure and unhallowed intermixture of the ſexes. By *Moſes*'s law *, it is expreſly ſaid, that *a baſtard ſhall not enter into the congregation of the Lord, even to his tenth generation ſhall he not enter into the houſe of the Lord.* It is a long entail of excommunication, or rather of non-admittance; and, not to mention other legiſlators equally as ſevere, by the civil law, he was made incapable of all teſtamentary benefit, either by father or mother.

It is ſuperfluous to add, that all the worthies celebrated in the Old Teſtament

* Deut. xxiii. 2.

hiſtory, as famous for any eminent qualities, or the atchievements of great exploits, were married men. Theſe were all pregnant examples of the dignity of the conjugal ſtate; and as they demonſtrate that greatneſs of ſpirit, true fortitude, and all diſtinguiſhing virtues and noble actions, are only compatible with ſuch a ſtate, ſo they ſeem to teach us yet farther, that they are the natural products and emanations of it. And yet many of thoſe illuſtrious perſons, upon a right computation of true glory and merit, muſt be allowed to have been as great heroes, as any are recorded in the memorials of fame.

To this may be ſubjoined, that Chriſt, who was veſted with authority to abrogate any laws, or ſupercede any cuſtom in which were found any flaw or obliquity, or had not an intrinſick goodneſs and rectitude in them, perceived marriage to be a ſtate ſo happily accommodated to the beſt-ordered condition of human life, that he made no other alteration in it, than to ſuppreſs the encroachments that had been made upon it, reform the abuſes that had crept into it, and reſtore it to its original boundary and primitive ſimplicity. He, whoſe great aim it was to inculcate the practice of all ſocial virtues, and to plant and propagate goodwill among men; gave ſanction to this amicable covenant, this primordial and moſt intimate bond of ſociety, by countenancing it with his preſence, and firſt miracle that

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he wrought in *Cana* of *Galilee.* And though he did not, in his own perſon, give us a ſpecimen of a marriage life, by entering into that ſtate himſelf (the ſublime circumſtances of his nature being incompatible with his making another one fleſh with himſelf) yet he ſufficiently ſhewed the high value and opinion he entertained of it, by forming many of his parables, alluſions, and emblems upon the plan of it, to convey his inſtructions to mankind.

Thirdly, What fortifies yet more the uncontrolable evidence, that marriage is honourable, is its mighty uſefulneſs, in that it is ſubſervient to all the important intereſts and grand purpoſes of life.

This recommended it to the general uſage of the world; by this it became ſo univerſally received and eſtabliſhed. The unenlightened part of mankind, who had no poſitive command from God, yet by the dint of natural reaſon, diſtinguiſhed its excellency by this criterion; that it had a natural tendency to promote the welfare, and carry on the valuable intereſts of our being.

This, upon a tranſient view, will undeniably appear, if we take a ſurvey of it with reference to men, conſidered collectively, as erected into publick bodies and civil ſocieties; or ſingly, as it is adapted to further

ther the diſtinct and ſeparate conveniency of private perſons.

Firſt, As to publick ſocieties. As families are collections of individuals, ſprung from the ſame ſtock and lineage, ſo are common-wealths compoſed of an aggregate of families; ſo that marriage is the reſource of all principalities, ſtates, and kingdoms in the world; it is this which upholds them and keeps them in being. Were they to truſt their ſupplying of the numbers that time makes a devaſtation of, and diſeaſes and accidents ſweep away, to the iſſues of vague and caſual intercourſe of the ſexes, to what a forlorn and deſolate condition would the moſt populous places ſoon be reduced? an eternal ſtruggle and contention amongſt men would ariſe, who ſhould keep the greateſt ſeraglio; and women compel'd to a ſurrender of their perſons where they can't give their hearts, would ceaſe to be prolifick; and not being actuated by a genial love, would be ſo reluctant to the forc'd and rapacious embraces, that that primitive command of, *be fruitful and multiply, and repleniſh the earth*, would, in a great meaſure, remain unfulfilled, and mankind would drop into diſſolution long before the general conflagration.

But ſuppoſing the promiſcuous uſe of women were allowed, and the contingent iſſues of theſe unhallowed mixtures were like to prove as numerous

numerous, as they uſually are within the pale of matrimony, yet how can we ſuppoſe that any proper care would be taken of them after they are brought into the world? who ſhall make proviſion for their nouriſhment? the fathers, dubious whether they be their own off-ſpring, will regard them with an unconcerned eye, and their mothers, ſtragling in their afflictions, and fond of new paramours, quickly will withdraw their compaſſion from them. And thus they will, of conſequence, be abandoned to the miſerable conflicts of famine and death.

But admitting they would be reared beyond the ſtate of infancy, what muſt become of them as to the formation of their manners? why, a man without education, is worſe and more dangerous than a brute. Without this, a company of men would be but a rout or rabble of ſavages and upright tigers. Without this, ſociety could not ſubſiſt, but would become a very plague. And it were better for mankind to diſband and live apart ſolitarily, and withdraw from one another, as beaſts of prey, into ſeparate dens and caves in a wilderneſs.

But now, where the natural deſires of the two ſexes are ſecurely enjoy'd, and their progeny made certain and peculiar by the incloſure of marriage; there huſband and wife unite in tenderneſs to their off-ſpring, employ their joint endeavours to furniſh them with

with ſuch qualifications as fits them, to become uſeful members of ſociety; they conſpire in their inſtructions, to make them exert their faculties, in contributing their ſhare of ſervice to the common good, with which they find their particular intereſts is intimately twiſted and involved by the neceſſary laws of ſociety; ſo that the publick emolument has a great hand in giving a ſpring and activity to their endeavours in advancing it, if, upon no better a proſpect, yet, as their perſonal fortunes are ſo cloſely complicated with it, that the one's ſinking, will probably occaſion the others ſuffering very much; the publick can ſcarcely miſcarry, but the private will run a great danger of ruin.

Add to this, that ſingle perſons are commonly no further ſolicitous, than how to ſecure their preſent eaſe and conveniency, and, if they can but enjoy the comfortable accommodations of life, during their own time, they ſeldom look any further. But thoſe who have entered into the alliance of matrimony, and are become parents to a family of children, they not only rejoice themſelves in beholding them *like olive-branches, round about their table*, but extend their concern for them to a period beyond their own lives, and are earneſt in their wiſhes, and reſtleſs in their aims, for their growing happy and flouriſhing after they are gone; and, fore-ſeeing they ſhall leave theſe valuable pledges of their love behind them, will,

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in conſequence of their wiſhes for the proſperity of their children, train them in ſuch trades and callings, occupations and buſineſſes, which, when purſued with competent induſtry, not only ſerve to render their own fortunes eaſy in life, but alſo vaſtly advance the proſperity of the community where they live; to which purpoſe they ſet their imaginations at work how they may out-vie and excel one another in the attainments of ſkill and ingenuity; and to this laudable impulſe and emulation is owing the invention and progreſs of all uſeful arts and ſciences, ſo beneficial to mankind.

Secondly, marriage is a ſtate adapted to procure and promote the diſtinct and ſeparate conveniencies of perſons, conſidered in a private capacity.

As great a paradox as it may ſeem to men whoſe judgments are warped by libertine principles, it is productive of every true comfort; it is calculated for every rational ſatisfaction, if people are not wanting to themſelves in making a right uſe of it. What can be named deſirable in life to which marriage does not, in a good meaſure, contribute? Health, wealth, credit, pleaſure, and whatever elſe is to be thought of under the article of eſteemables, are certain and never-failing appendages to it, as might, with a great deal of eaſe, as well as truth, be di-

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ſtinctly made appear, could time or your patience permit me to do it.

It is difficult to repreſent the ſweets of wedlock in ſo guarded a manner as not to give occaſion to the depravity of ſome mens hearts and vitiated imaginations, to raiſe unchaſte ideas from them; I ſhall give a ſhort ſketch of ſome few of them, with all poſſible caution not to adminiſter occaſion to any double entendre.

Wherever conjugal affection is thoroughly fixed and eſtabliſhed between partners aſſociated for life, how vaſtly ſhort are the common friendſhips of the world in compariſon of it? ſincere love, ardent, yet compoſed, ſtrong, yet ſmooth, reciprocal and conſtant, incorporates them in the ſtricteſt union of complacency and delight. The exterior of acquaintance, once over, and the forms and ceremonies laid aſide, (thoſe ſuſpicious attendants upon reſpect) they interchangeably expreſs undiſſembled kindneſs, and by a frank and honeſt comportment, adjuſt themſelves to each other in the moſt tender, obliging, though familiar manner. They reciprocrally impart their pleaſing ideas, transfuſe their ſatisfactions into each others ſouls, exchange their joys and divide their griefs, and, with the utmoſt confidence, make one anothers breaſts the cabinets wherein to repoſe their choiceſt ſecrets; united in the ſame ſentiments and reliſh of things, they fill up the chaſms of time

time in employments and divertiſements conformably to each others inclinations. In all the various occurrences and emergencies of life, they are affected with the like ſympathetic concern, paſs the like eſtimate upon the acceſſion of every good or evil that betides them, ever being true counterparts of each other. Their heart enlarges and expands itſelf (for I ſuppoſe them to have but one) upon every adventitious happineſs, contracts and cloſes up upon the apprehenſion of eithers misfortue; their pulſe keeping, as it were, even ſtrokes, and, like two equal tubes fill'd with mercury, they riſe or fall together upon the proſpect of ſerene or cloudy weather. Their conſenting ſouls, like perfect uniſons, are always tuned up to the ſame key, and when one is touched the other reſounds in the ſame note.

Thus their converſation being regulated by the ſacred laws of the moſt conſummate friendſhip, and conſiſting in a conſtant intercourſe of chaſte and unguilty endearments, they are a whole world to each other; and as much happineſs falls to their ſhare, as the nature of man can reach to in his lapſed and fallen condition. Such an habitual amity and concord, admitting of no diſcompoſure, and forbidding the intermixture of the turbulent paſſions, preſerves them in ſo advantageous a ſituation for true delight, that were I to ſeek for a heaven upon

earth, I ſhould think it was moſt likely to be found in ſuch a happy ſtate. And I do verily believe, that ſcarce one batchelor in the king's dominions, but would, and muſt declare, if examined upon oath, when arrived to the age of threeſcore years, that he has, more than once, regretted that he ſtood out ſo long ſolitary and non-compliant with the matrimonial engagement, and reflected upon his paſt wrong conduct, in having deprived and debarred himſelf of very many ſweet enjoyments and real pleaſures, which he could have no taſte or perception of in a celibate way of life.

The reaſons I have alledged to ſhew the honourableneſs of the married ſtate, are ſo evidently concluſive and inconteſtably ſupported, that they muſt carry conviction to every one's underſtanding, who is not irrecoverably under the power of prejudice, and obſtinately determined to oppoſe truth, becauſe it is unacceptable.

But then, that it may maintain this figure, and keep up to this character, there are ſome rules to be regarded, ſome decencies to be obſerved, by thoſe that take this ſtate of life upon them; through the failure and non-obſervance of which its eſſential properties will be deſtroyed, it will degenerate into an abyſs of diſcomfort, and, like a canker, corrode the vitals of happineſs,

pineſs, as well as reflect the laſt degree of ignominy and reproach upon it.

Thus marriage, though waited upon by unmingled joys of life, when regularly conducted, yet, when people ſhall, by mutual perverſeneſs and male-treatment, thwart and contravene its noble purpoſes, the deviating into the paths of forbidden pleaſures, is a down-right revolt from the ſacred faith they laid down in pawn, and they renounce their probity when they prove falſe to their matrimonial engagements. It muſt be a painful mortification to a man of common honour and honeſty, to reflect upon himſelf, when he is gratifying theſe ſtragling inclinations, that he knows himſelf to be a baſe man, that he is giving up all pretences to integrity, and can no longer preſerve the value he ſhould have of himſelf, but muſt neceſſarily ſink and debaſe himſelf in his own thought and eſteem, and in a little time become odious to himſelf and to all good men.

So that perſons who have entered into the connubial ſtate, and abandon themſelves to a vagrancy of affection, and live in a criminal commerce, contract a guilt exceeding common ſins, involve themſelves in a complication of evils of the moſt enormous ſize. For, beſides that it is commonly followed by a conſumption of health and fortune, they make a total ſhip-wreck of all truſt and credit, and brand themſelves with diſloyalty, perfidy, and falſhood, and by degrees

grees become a complication of real miſery. Every painful ſenſation is an ingredient to it, which, like an adheſive, painful cauſtick, will ſtick cleavingly to its patients, intolerable to be born, and yet impoſſible to get rid of; nay, one muſt ranſack hell for a compariſon, or, to find out any thing worſe.

The beſt things, when abuſed, are liable to the worſt corruptions. A cordial, by wrong application, may become a poiſon; and, in ſhort, every thing that adminiſters to the conveniency or pleaſure of life, by miſmanagement, may be ſo perverted as to become injurious and detrimental.

The *firſt* thing then requiſite to uphold the dignity of marriage, and to make its votaries happy, is mutual love: this is ſo eſſential that it muſt be, in a good meaſure, previous to it; it ſhould upon no terms, be entered upon without it, ſhould be carefully cultivated under it, and at no time be ſuſpended or intermitted.

It is the moſt prepoſterous and dangerous folly that can be, for a man and woman to embark together for life when this is wanting; it is as irrational to expect felicity as for the ſun to ſhine without light. Therefore, they ſhould maturely weigh aforehand what foundation there is for love to ſettle upon for duration; not to engage in ſo important an enterprize for the ſake of

wealth

wealth only, and eſtimate the value of each other by the number of pounds they come poſſeſſed of, which is only to be ſplendidly unhappy for life; much leſs to doat entirely upon the ſurface, and find nothing enamouring but what is only ſkin-deep, and to have love expire with the honey-moon; but to open the eye of reaſon, and view the internal endowments. True beauty and gracefulneſs, the moſt powerful attractives, and beſt accompliſhments, are ſeated chiefly in the mind and manners. Theſe, accompanied with the others, will, with tolerable diſcretion, furniſh a fund of happineſs, commenſurate with their lives. Theſe will be in perfection or improving, when the others are fading or loſt; theſe will ſupply fewel to keep love alive, and preſerve the hymeneal torch bright and flaming, till a period is put to their happineſs and their lives together. And as the plan for ſucceeding happineſs is preparatively to be laid upon virtuous diſpoſitions, and the engaging qualities of the ſoul, as the moſt laſting magnetiſm of affection, ſo the niceſt and moſt tender care is to be uſed all along to nouriſh and maintain it: nothing muſt be ſuffered to intervene that has any tendency to alienate their hearts from one another; nothing to create a diſeſteem, or ſo much as to abate their tenderneſs. A mutual love, thus cheriſhed and improved, will, of courſe, engage them,

Secondly,

Secondly, To a mutual faithfulneſs, which is another requiſite to ſupport the honour of marriage.

This is what is ſtipulated and promiſed by both parties before they make an abſolute ſurrender of themſelves to each other; they pawn their faith and troth to make good this promiſe, and by that they confirm themſelves a ſacred property to each other for life: ſo that it is the fundamental reaſon and condition upon which this ſolemn treaty depends; and, therefore, it is an engagement that muſt, upon no pretence, be violated; the greateſt power upon earth cannot relax it by any diſpenſation whatſoever; it muſt ſubſiſt in force, till the death of one ſhall ſet the ſurviver free.

Thoſe who enter into the married ſtate, ſays a late writer, "muſt correct in themſelves all tendencies to libertiniſm, and bid adieu to the falſe gallantries of the town; they muſt look upon themſelves as deſtined to ſober and reaſonable pleaſures. It has been one of the unhappineſſes of marriage, that a few looſe men of genius for pleaſure, have turned it all to the gratification of ungoverned deſires, in deſpite of good ſenſe, form, and order; when, in truth, any ſatisfaction beyond the boundaries of reaſon, is but a ſtep toward madneſs and folly.

"But

" But thoſe who are far gone in the plea-
" ſures of the town, who cannot ſupport
" life without quick ſenſations and gay re-
" flections, who are lovers of gallantry, rat-
" tle, and nonſenſe, and are ſtrangers to
" tranquility, to right reaſon, and calm
" motion of ſpirits, without tranſport, or
" dejection, are improper perſons to make
" huſbands of. They are immediately ſat-
" ed with poſſeſſion, and muſt fly to new
" acquiſitions of beauty, to paſs away the
" ſluggiſh moments and intervals of their
" lives; for with them, every hour is
" heavy that is not joyous. And ſuch gal-
" lants, with too much raſhneſs, throwing
" themſelves into this ſtate of gravity,
" ſo averſe to their conſtitutions, has ren-
" dered marriage, too often, the ſubject of
" contempt and general ridicule."

A *third* requiſite to keep up the honour of marriage, is religion. This, indeed, is the maſter-ſpring which actuates and invigorates every movement in the conjugal ſtate, gives energy and ſtrength to the fore-mentioned, and all other incidental duties; and, by its powerful influence and directions, keeps all the functions orderly, uniform, and regular.

Nothing caſts a more amiable luſtre, or gives a better gracefulneſs, than religion, where its genuine dictates give rule to the married converſation. Where this preſides in

its proper authority, neither ſide can be ſour, moroſe, or auſtere; but free, candid, and affable: and where married perſons chuſe this for their regulator, it incircles them with glory, and diffuſes a ſort of ſeraphick radiancy around them; they are the moſt charming ſight in the world; it extorts an uncommon eſteem from all well-wiſhers to the happineſs of the ſpecies, who will rejoice in obſerving how high it exalts human nature, and into what an advantageous ſituation it raiſes it, to carry on its approaches towards that of the excellent beings that are diſincumbered with fleſh. And as it thus honourably ſets off and adorns the marriage ſtate, ſo it enlarges and fills every capacity of happineſs in all married perſons too, who are under the influences of its conduct. To be happy, is not only to be free from pain of body, but anxiety of ſpirit; not only to enjoy the pleaſures of ſenſe, but the tranquility of the mind. Now, where religion governs, it ſecures both outward eaſe and inward peace; and, conſequently, as it gives an air of compoſedneſs to thoſe who are initiated into the ſtate of wedlock, ſo it does that of chearfulneſs too; no perſons whatſoever having ſo good a pretence to a true and ſolid gladneſs of heart (the very ſoul of life) as the ſincerely religious.

Moreover, religion is the higheſt accompliſhment of our being; it conſiſts in the neareſt

neareſt reſemblance to God, and conformity to his nature. Hence the imitation of the divine purity, juſtice, mercy, compaſſion, patience, and beneficence; does, in the nutural reſult of it, inſpire thoſe qualities which are more indiſpenſibly neceſſary under the indiſſoluble ties of marriage, to breed and cheriſh the ſacred amity.

In ſhort, religion fits people for the moſt delightful intercourſes of ſociety: and tho' it baniſhes levity of behaviour and diſſolute mirth; yet, in exchange, it fills the mind with ſerenity and chearfulneſs, and an habitual inclination to pleaſe others, as well as to be pleaſed one's ſelf.

Thus, I have, as I conceive, done ſo much juſtice to marriage, as to ſet it upon a footing of credit, and raiſed it above the inſults of libertine-wits and impious buffoons. I am well aware that many more excellent things might be added to what is ſaid, that I have left untouched, upon ſo copious a ſubject; but I am not to ſwell my diſcourſe into a treatiſe.

But, as marriage has received the moſt unhandſome treatment from the petulant pens of poets, who, to give a poignancy to their ill-turn'd wit, have raked together every foible, cull'd out all its blemiſhes, and, like poiſonous inſects, vented the venom, which they

they ſucked from the ſores and putrefactions of the married life, when under a ſtate of corruption; ſo, by way of counter-poiſon to the malignant taint, I ſhall, from one of our own poets, who ſtands in the foremoſt rank of them for elevated and juſt ſentiments, and noble and correct expreſſion, ſubjoin his juſt encomium of the married ſtate, ſo finely imagined, and ſo chaſtely pen'd, as muſt throw ſhame upon the licentious, if not reclaim them: they are the words of the ſublime *Milton:*

Hail weded love, myſterious law, true ſource
Of human off-ſpring, ſole propriety,
In paradiſe of all things common elſe.
By thee adult'rous luſt was driven from man
Among the beſtial herds to range, by thee
Founded in reaſon, loyal, juſt, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, ſon and brother, firſt were known.
Perpetual fountain of domeſtic ſweets,
Whoſe bed is undefil'd and chaſte pronounc'd,
Preſent or paſt, as ſaints and patriarchs uſed.
Here love his golden ſhafts employs, here lights
His conſtant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
Reigns here and revels; not in the bought ſmile
Of harlots, loveleſs, joyleſs, unindear'd.

I ſhall add one more quotation from another curious thinker, who has given the moſt finiſhed picture of the conjugal life, ſo fraught with tenderneſs, and the mutual endearment of the happy pair, that I cannot think a recital of

it

it from the pulpit, will be miſbecoming, tho' it be uncommon.

O marriage! happieſt, eaſieſt, ſafeſt ſtate;
Let debauchees and drunkards ſcorn thy rites,
Who in their nautious draughts and luſts prophane
Both thee and heaven, by whom thou waſt ordain'd;
How can the ſavage call it loſs of freedom,
Thus to converſe with, thus to gaze at
A faithful, beauteous friend.
Bluſh not, my fair one, that thy love applauds thee,
Nor be it painful to my weded wife,
That my full heart o'erflows in praiſe of thee;
Thou art by law, by intereſt, paſſion mine;
Paſſion and reaſon join in love of thee.
Thus through a world of calumny and fraud
We paſs, both unreproach'd, both undeceiv'd;
Whilſt in each others intereſt and happineſs
We, without art, all faculties employ,
And all our ſenſes without guilt enjoy.

I ſhall only add, by way of concluſion, my earneſt wiſhes, to which, I promiſe myſelf, all that hear me will join theirs, That the amiable couple (whoſe happy nuptials gave me this occaſion of celebrating the honour of marriage, though in this undigeſted manner) may prove a ſhining example and commendatory ſpecimen of the dignity of it; and, in their future conduct, be a continual ſilent repremand to ſuch proflagate tempers as ſhall come within the reach of their influence; and would ſully its glory, or depretiate its honour. May connubial love ſettle between them in ſolid af-

affection, and an habitual complacency become as natural as the genial heat that circulates the the vital fluid ;—may a ſecret indulgence, and reciprocal tenderneſs, continually diſpoſe them to caſt each others foibles (which the beſt natures and the beſt-refined education, are not totally exempt from) into the ſhade; but to bring every delicacy of manners, every deſire of pleaſing, into the faireſt light, to be viewed with the moſt diſtinguiſhing eye ; ſo that a mutual fondneſs may add new beauties to every thing that is good, give charms to what is indifferent, and cover every thing that is defective. In a word, may every quality that is an ingredient into the ſweetneſs and tranquility of life, be carefully cultivated and improved betwixt them ; and every thing that has the leaſt tendency to interrupt the mutual harmony and endearment which ſhould ſubſiſt between a virtuous married couple, be kept at a mighty diſtance; and no contention ariſe, no ſtrife ever find admittance, but only that truly laudable one, of which ſhall be moſt kind and obliging to each other, and which ſhall exert themſelves moſt in all actions of beneficence.

FINIS.

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